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“A Sad and Terrible Slaughter.”

Everything else about the South African war receives more attention than the ghastly wickedness of the fighting itself. One would have expected that in these days of conscience and tender feeling it would have been otherwise. A vast amount of intellectual ingenuity has been expended in trying to prove that the British or the Boers were the guilty cause of the war; that the interests of civilization would be promoted by the victory of this party or of that; that Great Britain or that the Transvaal is sure to win. Day by day men have perplexed their brains speculating whether the Cape Dutch will rise against England, whether the natives will fall to murdering the

whites, whether the European powers will intervene, whether France or Russia will become involved in war with Great Britain, whether the British empire will weather the storm or go to pieces.

What little time and intellectual acumen have been left have been spent in oracular advice as to how the British ought to conduct the campaign, in criticism of the war office, of the conduct of the generals on the field, of Mr. Chamberlain or of Mr. Gladstone.

Most of these, possibly all of them, have been proper subjects of discussion. Thoughtful men cannot help thinking and speaking of the numberless stirring and complex questions which any war raises. But the intellectual excitement of these seems to paralyze the moral faculties before the awful tragedy going on at the heart of them all. Instead of raising a great cry of horror and detestation which would shake the whole structure of civilization from side to side, men and women of kind heart and tender sensibility look coolly on the murderous and cruel assaults of battle as if they were matters of course, or after a moment of pain turn away from them entirely with tearless indifference. A witness of one of the battles between Generals Methuen and Cronje, after giving some details of the awful hell-pit before his eyes, despairs of finding words to make any one feel the unspeakable horrors of the scene, and declares that the best he can do is to call it a “sad and terrible slaughter.”

How can men and women, who weep over an ordinary death, who go frenzied over a railway wreck or an ocean disaster, read and speak without pain of what is deliberately done every day in South Africa? Men go out in the morning scouting; in the evening their horses come back without them, or are seen dragging them away over the hills and plains. Shells are dropped into tents killing half a dozen men, mangling as many more, and tearing the life out of a dozen horses. Men charge with inhuman yells up a hill, bodies are ripped to shreds and heads blown off as they go. When they reach the top other men, rolling on their backs and begging for mercy, are jabbed to death with lances, and it is euphemistically called “excellent pig-sticking.” Troops stealthily conceal themselves, and when their enemy is near, pour murderous volleys which sweep down whole ranks, and this fiendishness is called shrewdness and

strategy! An attempt is made to cross a river, and dead and wounded are heaped up in bloody, writhing piles and rows by the terrific rifle and rapid-gun fire. People seem to lose all heart and conscience when they read of these diabolical brutalities. Worse still, most persons enter much into the spirit of the participants, madly exulting if one side wins, raving or sullenly despairing if victory goes to the other.

It is sometimes said that battlefields are not the worst part of war. Certainly they are not the whole of it, for its spiritual corruptions as well as its material damages permeate to the farthest verge of society. But the battlefield is the sign and seal of all the rest. One may deny that the battlefield, taken in its entirety, is the worst thing on earth, but no supposed proof of the assertion is convincing against the intuitive perception of a pure and sincere spirit. A battle is the supreme denial of love, brotherhood, solidarity. It is the supreme assertion of self-confidence and self-will. It is the supreme contempt and rejection of others. It is the supreme exhibition of the elements of human discord and destructiveness. No motives, however lofty, which are supposed to justify war, can ever alter its nature, for these are not the elements in play during the combat.

The use of the horrors of the battlefield as an argument against war is not alone sentimental reasoning. The sentimental argument is strong enough. But the battlefield is very much more than the material horrors and bodily sufferings which constitute its exterior form. If its spiritual side could be portrayed, something infinitely sadder and more shocking would be seen. It is a "sad and terrible slaughter" of the humanities—of love, patience, tenderness of spirit, forgiveness, self-abnegation, self-control, truthfulness, purity of speech. The opposites of these come forth seeking whom they may devour. Of the proper relations of man to man the battlefield leaves nothing for the time being. Men are not only slain, blown or cut to pieces; they are captured and marched off as slaves temporarily. Home, wife, child—nothing is thought of them. Life, happiness, are held cheaper than shot and shell.

What is needed at a time like this of the Transvaal War is men and women who will dare to utter the covered thought of their heart about the iniquity of fighting. We are sure there are many who feel it as a ceaseless burden on their souls. Fear of suffering, of giving offense, of being misunderstood, cannot excuse one from making his protest against iniquity when it is being committed. Whichever of the two may be the more guilty and worthy of the severer condemnation, Briton and Boer are both wrong in turning themselves into butchers and seeking to settle the differences between them by mutual extermination. The same is true of men of whatever nation who in our time refuse the better way of peaceful settlement and return to the methods of the dog and the tiger.

Opposition in England to the South African War.

Notwithstanding England's great military outpouring and determined purpose to "see the thing through" in South Africa, apparently with the united support of the country, there are evidences of a deep and growing opposition to the war as "a bitter wrong and a gigantic blunder." Dr. Spence Watson, an able publicist in the north of England, is quoted as saying that where one man spoke out in opposition to the Crimean War, hundreds are openly declaring themselves opposed to the present one. A cultivated English lady, in a letter we have recently received, says: "Personally, I hear very little except voices condemning the war, but the papers are full of the war-spirit, bought over as they are by those whose interest it is to further their own aims at the expense of the nation."

A writer in the *Independent* (British), under date of December 28, says that the minority which opposes the war is not only strong intellectually, but that "it is growing in numbers every day." He then mentions a number of men, well known everywhere, as belonging to this minority. Among them are Mr. Morley, Mr. Courtney, Sir William Harcourt, Sir Edward Clarke, Mr. Frederick Harrison, Dr. Clifford, Mr. Stead, Mr. Frederick Greenwood, Mr. Herbert Spencer, Mr. Massingham, Mr. Crook, Mr. Justin McCarthy, Mr. Clement Shorter, Mr. Sylvester Horne and Mr. Silas Hocking. He might have added almost indefinitely to the list, using only the names of men prominent in public and private life. Mr. Massingham, whom he mentions, was the editor of the *Chronicle* and one of the most talented of British journalists. He stepped down and out, because he would not submit to "the will of his imperialist proprietors." Two of his co-laborers, Messrs. Harold Spender and Vaughan Nash, left the *Chronicle* with him. Mr. Crook was the editor of the *Echo*. He gave up his position rather than be the tool of the conscienceless counting-room.

The writer in the *Independent* cites an occurrence in St. James' Hall illustrating the strength of the opposition:

"Mr. Price Hughes had the bad taste to devote the afternoon of Peace Sunday to a violent speech in favor of the war, and he must not be surprised that his hearers, who have benefited by his teaching in an entirely opposite direction during many years, interrupted him with some very straight and embarrassing questions. Their behavior was, however, beyond criticism, and very different from the conduct of the Trafalgar Square mob, who were on Mr. Price Hughes' side, and who, having no better arguments, pelted white-haired advocates of peace with open penknives and rotten tomatoes. The firm but courteous protest at St. James's Hall on Sunday afternoon shows that a feeling is steadily growing among the